

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 9221

FROM THE AMBASSADOR TO THE SECRETARY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR

SUBJECT: PROGRESS REPORT ON DRUG PROGRAM

REF: STATE 233134 AND BRUSSELS A-209

1. SUMMARY. TO DATE BELGIUM DOES NOT HAVE A SERIOUS DRUG PROBLEM. LOCAL CONSUMPTION AND COMMERCIALIZATION IS LOW COMPARED TO NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. HOWEVER THERE ARE SIGNS OF INCREASING USE OF BELGIUM AS TRANSFER OR TRANSIT POINT FOR DRUG SHIPMENTS. TO COMBAT THIS LOCAL DEA OFFICE IS WORKING CLOSELY WITH BELGIAN LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES. RECENT SEIZURES HAVE POINTED UP NEED TO BELGIAN AUTHORITIES FOR CONTINUED VIGILANCE. WE ARE ALSO ENCOURAGING BELGIANS TO SPEED PASSAGE OF DRAFT LEGISLATION TO INCREASE PENALTIES FOR DRUG TRAFFIC OFFENDERS. MINISTRY OF JUSTICE IS AWARE OF THIS NEED AND RECENT PUBLICITY ON SEIZURES OF INTERNATIONAL DRUG SHIPMENTS MAY SPUR QUICK ACTION BY BELGIAN SENATE ON THIS BILL. WE PLAN FOLLOW UP ON THIS BILL IN CONTACTS WITH GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENT. CONTINUED US TRAINING OF POLICE PERSONNEL IS ENVISIONED FOR FUTURE AND REVIEW OF INCOUNTRY TRAINING NEEDS WILL BE MADE AT LATER DATE. END SUMMARY.

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2. FOLLOWING REPORT SUPPLEMENTS INFORMATION SUBMITTED IN

A-209-FISCAL YEAR 1976 PROGRAM GUIDANCE. AS REPORTED, LOCAL CONSUMPTION OF NARCOTICS DOES NOT POSE SERIOUS PROBLEM HERE. MOST DRUG USERS IN BELGIUM CURRENTLY TRAVEL TO HOLLAND TO PROCURE DRUGS SINCE THEY MORE READILY OBTAINED THERE. THE NUMBER OF ARRESTS FOR POSSESSION HAVE NOT INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY HERE. SOME INCREASE IN USE OF BELGIUM AS TRANSIT POINT FOR DRUG SHIPMENTS IS EVIDENCED BY RECENT SEIZURES. TIGHTENING OF ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS ELSEWHERE AND LESS SEVERE PENALTIES FOR TRAFFICKING IN BELGIUM AS WELL AS CENTRAL GEORGRAPHIC LOCATION OF BELGIUM APPEAR TO BE CHIEF REASONS FOR THIS INCREASE. CURRENT MAXIMUM PENALTY HERE IS TWO YEARS IN PRISON.

3. OUR EFFORTS TO DATE HAVE BEEN CONCENTRATED IN TWO MAIN AREAS: (1) IMPROVING LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES CAPABILITY IN DRUG ENFORCEMENT; AND (2) ENCOURAGING GOB TO ENACT LEGISLATION WITH STIFFER PENALTIES FOR ILLICIT DRUG DEALERS. FORMER HAS BEEN CARRIED OUT THROUGH DEA OFFICE NOW COMPOSED OF TWO FULL-TIME OFFICERS. THIS OFFICE WORKS CLOSELY WITH BELGIAN AGENCIES RESPONSIBLE FOR DRUG ENFORCEMENT AND HAS ASSISTED THESE AGENCIES IN PRESSING TO CONCLUSION SEVERAL CASES INVOLVING DRUG SEIZURES AND ARRESTS. TRAINING HAS ALSO BEEN PROVIDED FOR PERSONNEL IN THESE AGENCIES IN ADDITION, NEW PROCEDURES OF SHARING DEA INFORMATION ON KNOWN OR POTENTIAL DRUG OFFENDERS HAS JUST BEEN INSTITUTED IN CO-OPERATION WITH MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY GENERAL (PROCURER GENERALE). NEW PROCEDURES SHOULD RESULT IN BETTER COORDINATION AMONG THESE AGENCIES. RECENT SEIZURES AT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT OF ZAVENTEM, WHICH RESULTED FROM SPECIAL WEEKEND CUSTOMS ALERTS, WILL ALSO HAVE GOOD EFFECT OF ENCOURAGING BELGIAN OFFICIALS TO TIGHTEN CUSTOMS SURVEILLANCE AT MAJOR TRANSIT POINTS.

4. EFFORTS TO PROMOTE IMPROVED LEGISLATION HAVE CONCENTRATED ON INCREASING PUBLIC AWARENESS OF ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL PROBLEMS. LECTURES AND SEMINARS HAVE BEEN USED FOR THIS PURPOSE. GOOD PRESS COVERAGE OF RECENT SEIZURES HAS EMPHASIZED INCREASED USE OF BELGIUM AS TRANSIT POINT IN DRUG SHIPMENTS. RECENT CONTACTS WITH MINJUSTICE OFFICIALS, PARTICULARLY VISIT BY DEA ADMINISTRATOR JOHN R. BARTELS JR., HAVE RE-ENFORCED INTEREST OF THIS MINISTRY IN OBTAINING EARLY PASSAGE OF NEEDED LEGISLATION. CONFIDENTIAL

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DRAFT BILL, WHICH/INCLUDES PENALTIES OF 10 TO 15 YEARS FOR ORGANIZED DRUG TRAFFIC OFFENDERS, NOW AWAITING SECOND READING IN SENATE COMMITTEE. MINJUSTICE OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD US THEY WILL CONTACT SENATOR RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS BILL TO SEEK EARLY READING IN COMMITTEE. THEY FORESEE NO OPPOSITION ON SECOND READING AND BELIEVE BILL BE BROUGHT TO SENATE FLOOR FOR VOTE BEFORE END OF 1974. ONCE ADOPTED BY SENATE, BILL WILL GO TO HOUSE WHERE IT EXPECTED TO MOVE FASTER THAN IT HAS IN SENATE.

EFFORT WAS MADE IN SENATE TO ATTACH AMENDMENTS TO PROVIDE REMEDIAL HEALTH MEASURES FOR CONVICTED DRUG USERS. THIS CAUSED PROCEDURAL DELAY AND MINJUSTICE OFFICIALS BELIEVE THESE MEASURES NOW WILL BE SEPARATE BILL. EMBASSY AND DEA WILL CONTINUE STRESS NEED FOR EARLY PASSAGE THIS LEGISLATION IN CONTACTS WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT.

5. ONLY ASSISTANCE NEED ENVISIONED AT PRESENT IS ADDITIONAL TRAINING FOR BELGIAN POLICE PERSONNEL. AT PRESENT BELIEVE WASHINGTON TRAINING WILL MEET NEEDS FOR THIS FISCAL YEAR. HOWEVER, AT FUTURE DATE WILL REVIEW NEED FOR FURTHER IN-COUNTRY TRAINING WITH BELGIAN POLICE OFFICIALS. IF SUCH TRAINING IS THEN DEEMED NECESSARY, HOPE FUNDING WILL BE AVAILABLE.
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